

Measurements were not taken at the time the tortoises were first removed from the sand, but after 4 weeks they were as follows: Upper shell, 30 mm long, 23 mm at the widest part; neck, 35 mm long, 5 mm at narrowest; head, 10 mm across; legs, 20 mm from the shell to the needle-like toes.

THE FLORA OF HUNT'S DAM RESERVE, MERREDIN

By Mrs. M. B. MILLS, Merredin

Hunt's Dam Reserve is an area of approximately 31-36 hectares (78 acres) of undulating land and large granite rocks. The area is classified as "Recreation" Reserve 29700 which is vested in the Shire of Merredin. It formerly comprised three separate areas. In the north-west was vacant crown land. In the east Reserve 17042 (Avon Location 13196) was a former reserve for "Camping and Utility". The balance of the land was former Reserve 1314 (Avon Location 17657) which was set apart for the purpose of "Water" and vested in the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage.

It is situated north of Merredin township about 3½ miles from the railway station, on Chandler Road.

In recent years a signboard has been erected which reads: Hunt's Dam, originally built in 1866, by Surveyor C. Hunt using convict labour. According to local history Surveyor Hunt and his party pitched camp at the granite rocks and in an unusual breach formed by two large rocks built a wall of earth and stone to form a dam.

Since the days of my childhood Hunt's Dam has been a source of interest to me; many singular species of flora grow there which do not occur in other places in the district.

There are several species of *Acacia* and some of these trees are very large and very old, bent and gnarled, forming grotesque shapes. Lack of footholds on the edges and clefts in the rocks, high winds and time have caused the trees to grow in this manner.

There is black-barked manna gum, *Acacia microbotrya*, which has delicious gum exuding from the limbs of the trees, *Acacia lasiocalyx* with graceful long fingers of flowers, *Acacia cyanophylla* and *Acacia acuminata*. In May and into springtime these trees carry a heavy covering of yellow blossoms.

In sheltered places near the rocks, the tobacco plant, *Nicotiana rotundifolia*, with small whitish-grey flowers and large cabbage-like leaves can be found, its leaves giving off a strong odour due to sulphur and nicotine in the leaves.

At the base of the rocks near the dam beautiful red bottle brush, *Melaleuca fulgens*, grows as well as the climber, *Muehlenbeckia adpressa*, and "blind grass", *Stypandra imbricata*.

A shrub of *Cassia pleurocarpa* has made its appearance here in the past few years; there is only one shrub, but it is growing very well in rich soil, amongst *Acacias*.

Sheltering under the ledges of rocks are "snake bushes", *Isotoma petraea*, while on the rocks in pockets of soil hop bushes, *Dodonaea attenuata*, grow with golden brown seed pods and a strong odour coming from the leaves.

Here too, grows the graceful small shrub *Glycyrrhiza acanthocarpa* with pink pea-shaped flowers and long brown seed pods.

In clefts on the rock scarlet flowers of *Kunzea pulchella* may be seen in November.

Further up from the dam and rocks on an incline is a group of

interesting trees. *Pittosporum phillyraeoides* with pale green foliage sweeping to the ground and bearing beautiful orange-red berries which split open revealing small round seeds within, which are held in the pods by a sticky substance. The trees have a peculiar odour, especially the berries, but it is unique and pleasant.

Also on the incline is a greyish-white shrub, *Ricinocarpus velutinus*, which is fairly common in the north-eastern agricultural areas and adjacent pastoral areas, but is near its southern limit in this district; it does not apparently occur anywhere else in this district.

Here too, is *Hakea recurva* and *Grevillea paniculata*, small trees.

On the incline and further afield is thickly covered brown, waving spear grass, *Aristida contorta*.

An uncommon plant which is rare here is *Abutilon oxycarpum* and belongs to the hibiscus family. It is of unusual interest as it occurs otherwise only in the northern and eastern pastoral regions.

Growing in only one area here, sheltered by rocks and boulders, is a small plant, *Helichrysum ambiguum*, which is more typical of the drier inland districts; it has a very strong odour when the leaves are crushed, which is very head-clearing if one has hay-fever.

Red-centred mauve *Hibiscus* grows along a water course, but is common throughout the district.

Sandalwood trees, *Santalum spicatum*, grow prolifically on the reserve and bear an abundance of brown-skinned fruit, the kernel of the nut being delicious to eat, raw or cooked.

Casuarina acutivalvis wave and whisper in the wind, tall, straight and graceful with pendulous reddish-brown male flowers and large dark nuts.

There are many different species of grasses here, *Briza maxima*, *Briza minima*, and a scented grass, *Cymbopogon ambiguus*, which is rare here but is a widespread species in the north of the State, but does not extend far south of this district.

On the western and northern flats around the rocks there is a profusion of shrubs and flowers and small trees as follows:

<i>Acacia acuminata</i>	<i>Brachycome iberidifolia</i>
<i>Acacia microbotrya</i>	<i>Eriachne ovata</i>
<i>Acacia lasiocalyx</i>	<i>Solanum nigrum</i>
<i>Acacia cyanophylla</i>	<i>Casuarina acutivalvis</i>
<i>Augianthus tomentosus</i>	<i>Aristida contorta</i>
<i>Dampiera lavandulacea</i>	<i>Hakea recurva</i>
<i>Ursinia anthemoides</i>	<i>Podolepis lessonii</i>
<i>Waitzia acuminata</i>	<i>Santalum spicatum</i>
<i>Sida calyxhymenia</i>	<i>Alyxia buxifolia</i>
<i>Trichinium polystachyum</i>	<i>Isotropis juncea</i>
<i>Stackhousia hucgelii</i>	<i>Melaleuca radula</i>
<i>Brunonia australis</i>	<i>Waitzia aurca</i>
<i>Helipterum spicatum</i>	<i>Helichrysum lindleyi</i> (formerly known as <i>H. roscum</i>)
<i>Enchylaena</i> sp.	<i>Schoenia cassiniana</i>
<i>Melaleuca fulgens</i>	<i>Caladenia filamentosa?</i> var. <i>denticulata</i>
<i>Ptilotus spatulatus</i>	<i>Erenophila drummondii</i>
<i>Podolepis canescens</i>	<i>Isotonia hypocrateriformis</i>
<i>Muehlenbeckia adpressa</i>	
<i>Podotheca gnaphalioides</i>	

Donkey Orchids and small Blue Orchids are dotted about the flat.

Eucalypt trees are scattered about the reserve.

This part of the reserve is not usually frequented by tourists or locals, so it is in its natural state of rugged beauty.

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